

GENERAL HABITS: Very similar to the above species. A bird of deciduous forests, i.e. Silver Birch, Cherry, etc.

NIDIFICATION: The breeding season is stated to be May and June. The nest is very similar to that of the Red-headed Tit. B. B. Osmaston found a nest on June 11, placed 10 feet from the ground in a Cherry tree. It contained half fledged young. This was in the Tons Valley, Garhwal, 'just below the snows'.

23. *Sitta himalayensis* Jard. and Selby. The White-tailed Nuthatch.

SIZE: 5 inches.

FIELD CHARACTERS: Upper plumage slaty blue; underparts from throat pale rufous shading to a deeper tone on the abdomen and under tail coverts; white bases to the central tail feathers (not easily seen in the field); black eye stripe. Sexes alike.

DISTRIBUTION: Not uncommon in oak forests in the neighbourhood of Simla. Resident from 6,500 feet to 9,000 feet.

GENERAL HABITS: Arboreal. Seen usually in pairs and family parties, often attaches itself to the mixed foraging associations of small birds. A bird of the tree trunks running either up or down in its tireless search for food. Note: a sharp *twit-twit*. In Spring a pleasant trill is uttered.

NIDIFICATION: The breeding-season is from mid-March to the end of April. A small hole, usually one in an oak, is selected for the nursery. If the hole is too large the entrance is contracted to suit the size of the bird's body by plastering it with clay. The cavity is lined with chips of dead leaves on which the eggs lie. The clutch consists of three to six eggs which are white with red blotches. The hole may be from 4 feet to 50 feet from the ground.

24. *Sitta leucopsis leucopsis* Gould. The White-cheeked Nuthatch.

SIZE: 5 inches.

FIELD CHARACTERS: Differs from the above in having the sides of the face white, also in having the crown of the head black; underparts shading from cream on throat and breast to deep russet on the abdomen and flanks.

DISTRIBUTION: Resident from 7,500 feet to 10,000 feet. Rare in Simla. A flock seen on 'Jakko', 8,000 feet.

GENERAL HABITS: Practically the same as the White-tailed Nuthatch but whereas *himalayensis* prefers oak forest this species is a bird of the conifers. Its usual call-note is well described by Whistler, i.e. a plaintive, tinny, *quair-quair*.

NIDIFICATION: As far as I can discover Col. R. H. Rattray is the only ornithologist who has taken the eggs of this species. He found the bird fairly common round Dunga Gali and Miranjani, above 8,000 feet, Murree Hills. He says (*J.B.N.H.S.*, Vol. xvi, p. 424), 'A common nesting site is high up in a tall fir tree that has been struck by lightning and cracked down the centre; a convenient place in this crack is selected. Eggs 5 to 8 in number.' I found a nest in a similar situation near Kufri; the old birds were feeding young.

(To be continued)

ON THE CORRECT NAME OF THE TIBETAN SHRIKE USUALLY
CALLED *LANIUS TEPHRONOTUS*

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In his excellent monograph of the shrikes M. Olivier tentatively adopted the name *nipalensis* for the Tibetan Shrike, usually called *Lanius tephronotus* (op. cit., p. 48, 208), following the nomenclature employed by the workers of the British Museum (Ticehurst, Whistler, and Kinnear). However, Olivier remarks correctly that the question of the name of this species is by no means settled and that he believes '*que cette question devra etre considérée à nouveau.*'

In the following paragraphs an attempt is made to present such a renewed consideration of the nomenclature of this species. The obvious conclusion, to be drawn from the herewith presented evidence, is that there is no reason for transferring the name *tephronotus* Vigors from the Tibetan Shrike to a population in the western Himalayas.

The Type-Locality of *Lanius tephronotus* Vigors.

This shrike was described by Vigors in the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London* for 1830-31, page 43, from a collection of some sixty species received by Gould from the 'Himalayas'. Some of these specimens were illustrated by Gould in his simultaneously published *A Century of Birds of the Himalaya Mountains*. The name of the collector and the localities at which the specimens had been collected were, apparently deliberately, suppressed by Vigors and Gould. When, in the course of years, it was found that many of the sixty species described by Vigors had different subspecies in the eastern and western Himalayas, various authors restricted the type-localities of the species in the Vigors-Gould collection either to the eastern or western Himalayas. However, there is much evidence that the greater part of the collection came from a single area and that this area was the Simla-Almora district of the western Himalayas. Ticehurst and Whistler (1924, *Ibis*, pp. 468-73) therefore took the drastic step of restricting the type localities of all the sixty species described by Vigors to the Simla-Almora district in the western Himalayas. This action necessitated a radical shift of type-locality for no less than ten species as well as a change of names for several of them. How Ticehurst and Whistler thought they could justify their action is not quite apparent to me since they themselves admit that several of the species of the Gould collection are not now found in the Simla-Almora district (*Myiophonus horsfieldi*, *Otis himalayanus*, *Otis nigriceps*, and *Garrulax ocellatus*). Neither does *Pericrocotus brevirostris* occur in the western Himalayas as pointed out by Bangs (1930, *Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool.*, 70, p. 297) and by Mayr (1940, *Ibis*, pp. 714-15). Hartert (*Vögel pal. Fauna*, p. 925) and later Rothschild (1926, *Novit. Zool.*, 33, p. 239) pointed out that the specimen of *Dryobates hyperythrus* illustrated by Gould undoubtedly belonged to the eastern Himalayan race, and that there was no excuse to shift the type locality to the western Himalayas and to rename the eastern Himalayan form. It is obvious from this evidence that the Vigors-Gould collection was a composite one, and that it contained material from the eastern Himalayas and perhaps from other parts of India, in addition to the Simla-Almora material.

By far the most injurious effect of the wholesale shifting of type localities was that it resulted in the shifting of the name *Lanius tephronotus* Vigors from the well-known Tibetan Shrike, to which this name had been applied for nearly one hundred years, to a shrike of the western Himalayas. Whistler and Kinnear (1933, *Jour. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.*, 36, pp. 336-37) apply the name *tephronotus* to a local population of shrikes found in Lahul and the Suru Valley and use for the Tibetan Shrike the name *nipalensis* Hodgson.

This confusing transfer of names is unjustified and unnecessary for the following reasons:

(1) The name *tephronotus* has been applied to the Tibetan Shrike with such unanimity for the ninety-three years between 1831 and 1924 that only compelling reasons would justify a transfer. However, the only reasons advanced by Ticehurst and Whistler are vague conjectures.

(2) Even if the entire Gould-Vigors collection had been collected in the western Himalayas, it would still be unwarranted to reject the name *tephronotus* for the Tibetan Shrike since it is quite possible that the species is found in the western Himalayas as an occasional winter visitor or straggler. It has been reported breeding as far west as Garhwal (Whymper), although these birds may not have been typical *tephronotus*.

(3) The fact that Vigors described both *erythronotus* and *tephronotus* in the same work indicates that the gray-backed shrike he had before him was the very distinct Tibetan bird and not a specimen of the Lahul population which is much more similar to *erythronotus*. This is strengthened by the original description of *tephronotus* which states that the back is gray, the tail brown and implies that the white wing-spot is absent. These characters are valid for the Tibetan bird but not for the Lahul population. It is doubtful whether Vigors would have applied the name *tephronotus* (=gray-backed) to the Lahul population.

(4) Stuart Baker had already restricted the type locality of *L. tephronotus* to Gyantse, Tibet, which is in the breeding range of the Tibetan Shrike. This action definitely tied the name *tephronotus* to the Tibetan Shrike. Admittedly the type specimen of *tephronotus* cannot have been collected at Gyantse which around 1830 was quite inaccessible. Stuart Baker, after many years of residence in India, was surely fully aware of this. His full restriction of the type-locality reads: 'Himalayas, Gyantse, Tibet,' which may be interpreted to read: 'Winter visitor to the foothills of the Himalayas, typical breeding population at Gyantse, Tibet.' The rules of nomenclature state nothing about the selection of type localities, but it seems that it should be permitted to suggest a breeding range type locality for a bird that was described from its winter quarters. However, to avoid any possible criticism I shall rephrase Stuart Baker's wording and hereby fix the type-locality of *L. tephronotus* as follows: 'Foothills of the Himalayas near Darjeeling, where breeding birds of the Gyantse district may be expected to winter.' In view of the proven composite nature of the Vigors-Gould collection, Baker's restriction of the type-locality of *L. tephronotus* to the eastern Himalayas cannot be rejected, even though other parts of that collection came from the western Himalayas.

The shift of the name *tephronotus* was not accepted by Dunajewski in his revision of the *Lanius schach* group (1939, *Jour. Ornith.*, 87, p. 38) nor by the majority of the other non-British authors. Retention of the name *tephronotus* for the Tibetan Shrike, to which it has been applied by the majority of authors since 1831 therefore does not cause any confusion, as would the shift of this name to the Lahul population as proposed by Whistler and Kinnear.

The application of the name *tephronotus* to the Tibetan Shrike leaves without a name the Lahul population to which Whistler and Kinnear had transferred the name *tephronotus*. However, Dunajewski states that this population is but little distinct from *erythronotus* and that the name *L. jourotus* Hodgson may be available for it (1939, *J. Ornith.*, 87, p. 38).

Whether or not *Lanius tephronotus* Vigors is a distinct species still seems to be an open question. In the east where *tephronotus* and *schach tricolor* meet, there is no sign of intergradation. However, this may be due to a vertical gap between the ranges of the two forms. In the west, it is stated by Whistler and Kinnear (op.cit., p. 336) that there is a complete intergradation between *erythronotus* and the Tibetan Shrike. This is denied by Dunajewski (op. cit., pp. 30-35). A renewed study of the shrikes of Garhwal, Kumaon, West Nepal and the adjoining districts of Tibet will surely decide this point. It is quite possible that these shrikes present another case of circular overlap of races, and that *tephronotus* acts with *schach* like a good species in the eastern Himalayas, but intergrades with it in the western Himalayas. It is significant that among all the races of *schach* the one which is morphologically most similar to *tephronotus*, namely *erythronotus*, is also the only one which, like the Tibetan Shrike, has become adapted to the high mountains.